

## The Americanization of Memory: The Case of the Holocaust

*Natan Sznaider*

Almost 300 years ago, John Locke began his political investigation into the nature of modernity with the statement, 'Once, all the world was America'. At the turn of the millennium, I would like to ask if we are returning to the point at which all the world is becoming America again. The purpose of this chapter is to present the distinctive form that collective memories take in the age of globalization. My focus will be on the American case and the particular significance of Holocaust memory, or what is often called 'the Americanization of the Holocaust'.

Over the 1990s the concept of 'globalization' and with it, of course, 'Americanization' has caught the attention of public discourse regarding the prevalence of consumption and popular culture. Anxieties over the global in our time replay similar anxieties regarding Americanization just a century ago. Then and now, the theme of a 'global culture' has become the subject of political, ideological and academic controversies. Many of these debates are framed in dichotomous terms, juxtaposing national and post-national models: the former perceives globalization as a shallow replacement for national values. These so-called 'national values' are often called 'authentic' in times of post-nationality. The emergence of mass consumption has played a major role, since the existence of transnational modes of identification is often equated with the imminent end of the nation. Consumption patterns across nations are interpreted as leading to global homogenization. Thus, in the anti-modernist mind, America stands for everything evil: soullessness, alienation, loneliness, a hell of egoism. Something more than the consumption of food, clothes and other goods is at stake here, however. One of the dramas of this process is played out in the relationship between globalizing processes and the political-cultural foundations for new forms of collective memory – the consumption of

memory, so to speak. What has emerged is a distinctive type of collective memory that transcends the confines of the nation state without necessarily replacing national memories. This form of memory is *global*, because it refers to memories that are shared and disseminated by a particular group of people whose claims for collective identities are no longer articulated in particularistic national terms but rather universalistic global terms. Here again the role of America is crucial. It is my contention that *global memory* is the product, among other things, of an encounter between different spatial modes of identification and changing apprehensions of time. I will approach these issues in regard to the so-called 'Americanization of the Holocaust'.

### **The Americanization of the Holocaust**

When it comes to the 'Americanization of the Holocaust', misunderstandings abound. The phrase is well integrated into anti-American discourse; critics use such terms as 'banalization', 'trivialization', 'Disneyfication', even 'McDonaldization' of the Holocaust (Cole 1999; Flanzbaum 1999; Junker 2000; Novick 1999; Rosenfeld 1997; Shandler 1999). This criticism, which can also be heard in Jewish circles in America, resonates with Frankfurt School criticism of America and what it perceives as mass culture. The 'instrumentalization' of the Holocaust has become a code word. Clearly, this is connected to a broad critique of 'sentiment', unmasking – so to speak – the economic or symbolic class interests of those who attempt to convey memory through different means of communication (Finkelstein 2000; Novick 1999).

In my opinion, all these thinkers believe in the existence of pure, perfect and transcendental memory, which, of course, cannot be represented by what are perceived as American consumer products, such as the soap opera *Holocaust*, the film *Schindler's List*, or even the 'US Holocaust Museum'. However, memory, especially in times like ours, depends on mass-mediated forms of communication. These forms, at times, transcend the boundaries of the state; at other times they are in tune with it. This is particularly true for the memory of the Holocaust, which cannot be restricted to place or space (Hansen 1996).

Thus, my view of the 'Americanization of the Holocaust' will take a different turn. I will try to show that concepts such as 'banalization' or 'trivialization' are connected to a greater extent to a classical European critique of mass culture, but do not contribute much to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Furthermore, I would like to argue that if we look more closely at the so-called narrow-minded insistence on Jewish singularity and its concomitant particularism, we will find that it yields an unintentional universal message and, furthermore, that those who high-mindedly fear the Holocaust's

‘Disneyfication’ or ‘Spielbergization’ are missing the function of this process as a gateway to the increasing universalization of the Holocaust. Therefore, a sociological rather than a normative look at Americanization can perceive it as a mode of dissemination. As such, it leads neither to homogenization nor to trivialization. Instead, through its penetration on the global and local/national level, it challenges the particularistic frameworks that were established, mostly through the interaction between American Jewish groups’ efforts to establish a clear-cut ethnic identity between the 1960s and the 1990s, and US foreign policy objectives.

### **Globalization and Collective Memory**

First, however, let me share a few conceptual thoughts on the relationships between globalization and collective memory. Up to now, most scholars of collective memory – Anthony Smith (1995; 1998), for example – have considered it exclusively as a national phenomenon. Globalization has been viewed as something that dissolves collective memory and sets up inauthentic and rootless substitutes in its stead. This position on global culture as memory-less is predicated on a homogenized conception of this culture. This brings us to the first problem, namely that global culture as it exists today is not really homogeneous. A better provisional starting point would be that global culture *hybridizes* (Albrow 1996; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Gillespie 1995; Nederveen Pieterse 1995; Robertson 1995; Tomlinson 1999).

The same is true for time. Global culture does not erase local memories, but rather mixes in with them. To say that nations are the only possible repositories of true history is a breathtakingly unhistorical assertion. There is now a vast literature on national traditions, and it is clear that every single national tradition has gone through a moment of ‘invention’. What heightens the ironical twist is that when national cultures were being invented, the same arguments that are being aimed at global culture today were used to oppose them: that they were superficial and inauthentic substitutes for rich local culture, and that no one would ever identify with such large and impersonal representations. This leads me to a fundamental point. In both transitions, to the national and to the global, the imagined plays a key role. In his classic book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1983) described how communities – and especially nations – are unities that are fundamentally imagined. The very belief that there is something fundamental that lies at their core is always the result of a conscious myth-building process. The emergence of the nation state, at the turn of the twentieth century, relied on a process by which the existing societies used representations to turn themselves into a new entity, which would impact

immediately on people's feelings and on which they could build their identities – in short, a group individuals could identify *with*. This nation-building process fully parallels what is happening through globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century. The nation *was* the global when compared with the local communities that preceded it. But the nation was not for that reason inauthentic. The ability of representations to give a sense to life and shared community is not ontologically but rather sociologically determined.

Anderson makes it clear that it was precisely the now-lambasted media (in the case of the nation, the printing press) that produced the requisite solidarity through a constant repetition of images and words. In the era of globalization, an analogous role is played by the electronic media. The speed and imagery of the new global communications are what make possible a shared consciousness, and hence a collective memory that spans territorial and linguistic borders. The new identity is produced not instead of the old, but by transforming it – just as in the building of nations. Today this is done through global media events. Thus, if the nation is the basis for authentic feelings and authentic collective memory – as the critics of global culture are almost unanimous in maintaining – then it cannot be maintained that representations are a superficial substitute for authentic experience. On the contrary, representations are the basis of this authenticity. This holds true for both the national and the global, as both require an imagined community.

### **Memories of the Holocaust**

The history of the memory of the Holocaust – or rather of its various representations – provides an ideal opportunity to bring into focus both the creative powers of globalized culture and the central role of its social carriers, the cosmopolitans. The Holocaust has been the leading example of the attempt to internationalize collective memory throughout the post-war period, and I argue that it is now the paradigm of collective memory in the global age. The ongoing discussion about the Holocaust thematizes the problem of remembrance and forgetting, and the changing relations of universal and particularistic self-understandings.

#### *Universalism and Particularism: Cosmopolitanism and the Jewish Experience*

What group is most suited to be the carrier of such global memories? I will look at a group that supports global memories not through their physical presence but rather through their representation as the Universal Other. Furthermore, this Universal Other is defined as the 'innocent victim'. Here I am concerned with the representation of Jews as cosmopolitans. Part of the reason is that

Jewish experience can be considered the original, paradigmatic case of cosmopolitanism during the times of nationalism. Jewish existence before the Holocaust, and before the founding of the state of Israel, mixed longing for territorial independence with attraction to and enmeshment in other cultures. This condition of diaspora did not grow out of Judaism *per se*, but out of tensions among citizenship, civil society and cultural identity. Jewish culture was not only mixed with other cultures, it was itself a mixture of cultures. In a certain sense, it was a culture that 'Judaized' the cosmopolitan mixture of cultures it absorbed – it gave them a unifying cast without negating them. This is part of the reason why Jewish culture is so well adapted to being the background model of global modernity. The experience of diaspora, of life in exile, is the clearest example modernity can put forward of sustained community life that did not need a territorial container to preserve its history. In Jewish experience, similar to the Black experience, life outside the nation state is nothing new. Thus, not only the memory of the Holocaust, but the Holocaust itself, as the event that sought to destroy this culture, is becoming central to moral concerns in our age. It is no coincidence that this process moved from Europe to the USA and from there back to Europe.

What can be seen from the example of the USA is that group membership does not have to be connected to allegiance to the state. Ambiguity is built into such relations. Jews in America can be everything: Jewish, Americans, loyal to Israel or none of the above. Whatever they choose to be, it does not contradict their being Americans. Part of the emergence of multiculturalism means that each ethnic group asserts its own unique history and tries constantly to universalize this uniqueness. As allegiance to the state diminishes, group identity plays itself out through a heritage of suffering. In the USA this began notably with Blacks and women in the 1960s and 1970s who tried to define themselves through a moral identity of suffering. The Americanization of memory, I would like to argue, liberates memory of its parochial and particularistic stronghold, even though often carried by particular Jewish interests and politics.

The former research director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Michael Berenbaum, defined the Americanization of the Holocaust as follows: 'to tell the story of the Holocaust in such a way that it would resonate not only with the survivor in New York and his children in San Francisco, but with a black leader from Atlanta, a Midwestern farmer, or a Northeastern industrialist' (Berenbaum 1990: 19). This remark clearly demonstrates to what extent the museum is an example of the desire of Jews in America to be part of the majority culture, by linking the Jewish history of suffering to the present and future institutions of America. Yet at the same time there is a thrust to be different, by claiming and insisting on the uniqueness and particularity of their

history as a minority. Like the global and the local, universalism and particularism do not need to be mutually exclusive. These issues were, of course, the topic of heated debate among all those involved in the project (Linenthal 1995).

These developments are even more astonishing when we take into account the fact that the Holocaust, as we understand it today, did not actually play a large role in American public life prior to the 1960s. Before then, there was no 'Holocaust'. There was simply a holocaust that encompassed all the mass killings of the Second World War, and included the mass murder of the Jews. In other words, the six million were originally subsumed in the 60 million. This was not because observers were indifferent towards the Jews, but because they perceived these events against the background of a global war that killed between 50 and 60 million people. Nazi atrocities were originally interpreted in a universalistic fashion. Jews were considered one group among the many victims of Nazism. This position was well anchored even in the indictment of the Nuremberg trials (Marrus 1998). This was also why the trials were supported by a small number of cosmopolitan intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers and Dwight MacDonald. This was a small cosmopolitan moment in history and it was attached to America's moment as victor in the Second World War, ignoring the atrocities of the Soviet Union, as well as ignoring Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was also the time of the Cold War.

All this began to change in the 1960s. Campaigns by Jewish organizations were very much the driving force of these changes. All these campaigns were vitally connected to the changing status of victimhood – to its transformation from something to be ashamed of to a sign of grace and moral righteousness. This was connected to the rise of 'identity politics' in America, which shifted the focus of political rhetoric from universal concerns to the particularistic claims of groups and subcultures. It was during these decades, when the 'voicing of pain' replaced the voicing of interests in American politics, that the Second World War made the transition from a holocaust to 'the Holocaust'. This represented the successful assertion by the American Jewish establishment that it represented an ethnic group that had a special moral claim based on having suffered the ultimate victimization. The story of Jews and the Holocaust steadily took predominance in the public's eye over all other aspects of the war. Pivotal points in this narrative are the Eichmann trial of 1961, and the Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, during which the Holocaust became an effective weapon for defending Israel in American political forums. While Israel might have been the initial mover of Holocaust consciousness, it was the emergence of Jewish particularistic identity that moved the Holocaust to

centre stage in American consciousness. Here, the notion of 'uniqueness' is central. There is an irony that 'absolute' and 'unique' victimization became the main marker of Jewish identity at just the time that American anti-Semitism was entering into decline and the last barriers to Jewish advancement were being lifted. The Holocaust became the central Jewish American narrative at precisely the time when the Jews were becoming the most successful minority group in the USA. However, and critically, the Holocaust moved centre stage in other countries as well, and not just in terms of local Jewish identity politics. Nor should its meaning for non-Jewish Americans – that is, for 97 per cent of the US population – be overlooked. This development has maintained or increased the universalization of the terms in which America understands the Holocaust – a universalism that is striking in a comparative perspective, when the American discourse is compared with the German or the Israeli discourse.

There are two reasons why the particularization of the Holocaust among the Jewish elite contributed to the universalization of the Holocaust among Americans as a whole. The first reason is that the campaign to make the Holocaust a central element in American life was such a success. Yes, it gave the Jews a privileged role as victims. However, it also gave America a much odder role as privileged witness. Since the politics of victimization are also the politics of identification, non-Jewish Americans have come to identify en masse with the Holocaust in a way that strikes Israelis, Germans and even American Jews as unsettling. Non-Jewish Americans have come to count themselves among the primary keepers of the flame of remembrance. This is why they have a Holocaust museum in a country where there were no concentration camps and where Jews are a tiny minority.

Can we look at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as the 'Christianization' of the Holocaust, comparing it even to the 'Stations of the Cross?' Does this not mean the 'de-Judaization' of the Holocaust? This was one of the frequent arguments against the museum in Washington, seen as 'Americanizing the Holocaust'. However, 'Christianization' is what universalization means in the 'Western' context. Further, secular Christianity, by and large, is what the West means by secularism. Remove religion from the Holocaust, invite non-Jews – namely, secular Christians – to consider it vitally their own, and this is what you get. It is hard to see how you could get anything else. Hence it is fitting that the establishment of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is at the centre of America's symbolic life – the Washington Mall – and it demonstrates that the Holocaust has become part of the American secular religion. Since most of America is not Jewish, this is in itself a massive act of universalization.

Such sacralization is an unavoidable by-product of collective memory. If something becomes indelibly inscribed in the identity of a group, ethnic or

national, then it is necessarily ringed round with taboos – and that is the simplest definition of the sacred. There are drawbacks to sacralization. The same passions that preserve memory against forgetfulness also defend it against desacralization. These same passions will be turned against any investigator who tries to examine the phenomenon in question dispassionately. Any such investigation will be taken as an offence against memory and the group. Nevertheless, something cannot become part of the civic religion without taking on an air of the sacred. If it is sacralization that is distasteful, the only alternative is collective forgetfulness. In the 1950s, we had universalization without sacralization – and without collective memory. Instead we had individual memory, and collective silence. One can argue about relative proportions – about *how* important this or that event ought to be in the collective memory of the Jews, or in the collective memory of the world's only superpower. If you think it ought to be part of the collective memory, then you must allow it to be sacralized. The second and related way in which this sacralization of the Holocaust has led to the universalization of the terms in which America understood it stems from the end of the Cold War.

### **The Universalization of Holocaust Memories**

In the remainder of this chapter I will focus on the emergence of an increasingly global and universalized discourse about the Holocaust during the 1990s. The role of the USA and what is commonly referred to as the 'Americanization of the Holocaust' are decisive factors in this development. I am referring here to the particular American treatment of the Holocaust as an event that has come to this 'world' as a crime upon humanity, the worst of all crimes. This is also the universal meaning of the Holocaust – the beginning of a pervasive human rights discourse and the foundation for globalized memories. In other words, the Americanization of the Holocaust is synonymous with its universalization.

#### *The Holocaust as Genocide: Kosovo and the Americanization of Memory*

A key reason that propelled the universalization of Holocaust memory stems from the end of the Cold War and growing awareness of genocidal acts. This is because genocide *is* the universalization of the Holocaust. It is essential to the concept that the Holocaust is but one instance of a class of (by definition comparable) phenomena. The UN Declaration against Genocide in 1948, where the idea first took shape, was the product of precisely that period when the universal understanding of the Holocaust was as yet unchallenged. The Kosovo conflict was a turning point for the memory of the Holocaust. Kosovo

was a globally televised morality play. The war was repeatedly justified with metaphors articulated in reference to the 'lessons of the Holocaust'.

References to the Holocaust featured prominently in articulating a moral and political response to Kosovo. In contrast to genocidal activities in Rwanda, inter-ethnic warfare in Kosovo with its European setting and its televised images resonated with Holocaust iconography. America's involvement in Kosovo was primarily framed as a moral obligation, largely in response to previous failures to intervene on behalf of innocent civilians. The slogan of 'Never Again' was simultaneously a reminder of the Second World War and the delayed involvement of the USA in Bosnia. Kosovo provided an opportunity to reconfirm the lessons of 'Never Again' revealing the full extent of the Americanization (and universalization) of Holocaust memory. If we take these UN conventions seriously in all their clauses, then the danger of a 'new Holocaust' is ever-present, and it is the duty of the USA and others not to sit by, but to do something about it. In the USA, this is what is widely considered the 'lesson of the Holocaust'. This 'lesson' represents a completely universalized understanding of the Holocaust.

The frequent invocation of the Holocaust raised public awareness around questions of uniqueness and comparability, and the use of the past in general. As such, Kosovo and its connection to the Holocaust greatly contributed to an increasingly self-reflexive form of globalized memory drawing on its universal message. Nevertheless, the full extent of the Americanization of Holocaust memory was evident in the pervasiveness of the moral imperative to assist innocent victims threatened by genocide. It was not so much the Holocaust per se, but rather the universal lessons derived from the bystander syndrome that mattered. Holocaust memory was no longer confined to Jewish groups or historians, nor was it simply a metaphor for good and evil. Instead, it was reconceptualized as a matter of civic responsibility for those suffering at a distance. A particular obligation to remember was complemented with a universal demand to act. All victims have turned into Jews. These kinds of 'Americanized' versions of memory, which need to be understood as a particular mixture of ideal and material interests, have been further read and interpreted outside the USA as well. Israel and Germany provide very good examples.

Compared with Germany or Israel, where the uniqueness of the Holocaust has much deeper roots in national experience, America was originally, and is now once again, the land of the universalized Holocaust. How could it be otherwise, in a country that was neither the victim nor the perpetrator? It is not only that the thirty years between 1960 and 1990 were an exception, and it is not only that the exception has lasted almost as long as the rule. Through America, the Holocaust has become central to the discourse of the world. Both

of these outcomes are the unintended but world-historical effects of the in-group jockeying of Jewish ethnic politics in the USA. Second, this thirty-year period has put a peculiar stamp on the specifically American understanding of the Holocaust. What the Jewish American establishment has succeeded in accomplishing is that the Holocaust is never universalized for the past. The overwhelmingly dominant narrative in America is that the Holocaust was a crime perpetrated against the Jews. Even when other groups, such as homosexuals and gypsies, are included in the litany of Holocaust victims, their presence does not dilute the Jewishness of the catastrophe; they are simply unfortunates dragged into its wake. For the immediate future, the Holocaust is universalized. Almost anyone might be the victim of the 'next' Holocaust. This stands out in stark contrast to Germany, where the comparisons that cause public debate have all been about the past – attempts to relativize the guilt of the Nazis by asserting that their actions were comparable to similar regimes. This explains why during the Cold War the 'comparability of the Holocaust' in Germany was the cause of the Nazi-sympathizing right, where in America it was the cause of the human rights left.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum perfectly embodies the American split perspective. The permanent exhibit of the museum is about the past suffering of the Jews. But the special exhibits – which, like all special exhibits, draw special attention – are about non-Jewish victims suffering somewhere in the world today. Like a huge camera obscura superimposing the image of the past onto the screen of the present, the museum is a universalization machine. When Elie Wiesel stood next to President Clinton in front of the museum exhibit on Bosnia and said he could not sleep at night thinking about the Bosnians' suffering, the two sides of the narrative merged. It was a perfect demonstration of how the particularist discourse of 1961–1991 had been transformed into the universalist discourse of the post-Cold War era while still preserving a privileged place for the original Jewish victims. Here the ultimate victim wielded his unique moral authority to attempt to shame the country that considers its foreign policy uniquely moral to stop the new holocaust of non-Jews. Here the chief representative of the American Jewish Holocaust could confirm himself as the world's true moral authority by setting high moral standards for real world action. He could preserve this authority by always setting them slightly higher than 'mere realpolitik' could ever meet. On the other hand the Americans, having erected a monument to this moral authority, now had someone to vouch for their chosenness, for the fact that their actions, unlike those of all other countries in history, were motivated first and foremost by moral concerns. If the two groups – the Jewish organizational elite and the American foreign policy elite – needed each other during the Cold War, they

may need each other now even more. Their moral claims are if anything even more ambitious, and their need for mutual reinforcement and support even greater.

There are four ways in which the Holocaust can be universalized: victims in the past (was it the Jews plus a supporting cast, or many different peoples who suffered?); victims in the future (is the lesson Never Again for the Jews, or Never Again for anyone?); perpetrators in the past (were the Nazis uniquely evil, or were they only different in degree or quantity from other mass murderers?); and subjects in the present (who remembers? in other words, who has the right to pronounce the truth of the Holocaust?) What has happened in America due to thirty years of Jewish ethnic politics is that the Holocaust past is now considered entirely in particularistic terms: the Nazis were uniquely bad, the Jews uniquely innocent victims, and everyone else in the story played a secondary role. But the Holocaust future is now considered in absolutely universal terms: it can happen to anyone, at any time, and everyone is responsible. Nevertheless, this universality is considered a form of fealty to the Holocaust, a way of magnifying its importance rather than diminishing it – a way of making it a moral touchstone, a call to action, and a sign of liberal and patriotic virtue. This definitely distinguishes the meaning of the Holocaust in America over the last fifty-five years from the meaning it has had in Israel or Germany.

### **Elie Wiesel Meets Oprah Winfrey**

Eva Illouz shows in her article in this volume how the *Oprah Winfrey Show* is a good example of a genre that documents, discusses and gives voice to suffering. This is also connected to the present topic. Oprah Winfrey has her own wildly successful magazine called *O*. In the November 2000 issue, Oprah talked to Elie Wiesel, the American icon of the Holocaust. The article starts like this:

He's a man who's lived through hell without ever hating. Who's been exposed to the most depraved aspects of human nature but still manages to find love, to believe in God, to experience joy. (*O* magazine, November 2000: 232)

The cover banner headline reads 'Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust: How He Saved Himself – And His Heart'. The interview is about Wiesel's recovery, his being a victim and becoming a fully human being. All this can be seen as the most eloquent example of the trivialization, or the Americanization, of the Holocaust, but as Illouz claims in her reading of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, 'a therapeutic narrative is a story about the self, which connects a present suffering to a past event, often called a trauma'. Could this be true for the case

of the Holocaust as well? This raises the question of the ‘true’ meaning of the Holocaust. If one takes as a given that the meaning of the Holocaust is fundamentally collective and political, then this kind of ‘Wieselized’ reading is trivial and superficial. An alternative reading, however – the modern, Protestant, individualized (Americanized) point of view – is one-to-one, responding in an individual way to the question: ‘What is the Holocaust for me?’ Wiesel’s story appeals to the reader/viewer in such a way as to ask, ‘What does it make me think, how does it make me feel, how can I possibly comprehend the enormity that seems beyond words?’ To make an analogy to the church, this represents a desire for a one-to-one relationship to the Holocaust, unmediated by priests.

In other words, it is possible to relate to the Holocaust individually and psychologically rather than collectively and politically (defining the ‘political’ as collective undertakings). If one believes that depoliticization is in essence wrong, then, of course, one will argue that this is wrong as well. This partly accounts for the anger that the US Holocaust Memorial Museum or Spielberg often provoke. The depoliticization of the Holocaust is simply a reflection of the depoliticization of America – or, viewed from another standpoint, the individualization and decollectivization of its culture. The Holocaust is primarily an identity issue in America because everything is primarily an identity issue once individuality replaces collectivity as the ultimate reality of reference. What, of course, troubles so many intellectuals when they relate to the vocabulary of victimization (of ‘survivors’, for example, who survive alcoholism, child abuse, being an orphan or living in a poor neighbourhood – the typical topics of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*) is the democratization of psychology – a psychology that anyone can apply, and that is best applied by (support) groups of normal people (see again the contribution by Illouz). In other words, we have a psychology that does not need therapists – a religion that does not need priests. So when critics decry the victimology of the Holocaust, they are decrying people who treat historical events as personal rather than collective experiences, which is simply an everyday choice in a decollectivized society. In the final analysis, they are decrying the way people describe their personal experiences in ‘uneducated’ clichés. They call it ‘trivial’, or ‘Americanized’.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I believe we can say that the emergence of ‘global memory’ is closely related to processes of globalization at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. If the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century emphasized the invented (and imagined) dimension of collective memory, the

second half of the twentieth and the beginning of twenty-first century reveal a shift to a more reflexive type of collective memory that self-consciously combines the universal and particular and extends its scope beyond the national. To be sure, this shift is neither inevitable nor is it the sole proprietor of contemporary memory types. Rather it is the product of broader historical processes simultaneously leading to the proliferation of particularistic memories and the emergence of a universal 'global memory' challenging the primacy of national narratives. No longer is the nation state the uncontested privileged site for the articulation of collective identity. The hegemonic state has been supplanted by society. This also means that our recent preoccupation with memory might express a transformed need for temporal anchoring, when, in the wake of the information revolution, the relationship between past, present and future is being transformed. Temporal anchoring becomes even more important as the territorial and spatial coordinates of our early twenty-first-century lives are blurred. This is amply demonstrated by the recent memory boom expressing the basic human need to live in extended structures of temporality.

'Global memory' indicates that there is not one apprehension of time, but rather that different groups have distinctive memories organizing meaningful structures of temporality for them. In the cosmopolitan global project, historical time is no longer conceived as 'national culture of memory', with individual recollections enclosed within it, but as fragmented and plural; in other words, a cosmopolitan and therefore optional remembrance and memory with all the resulting contingencies, complexities and contradictions of individual memory. This, as I have tried to show, is a project coming out of America and its ethnic minority groups, such as African-Americans, Jews and others. They have broken the spell of national memory. In these 'Black' and 'Jewish' forms of memory and remembrance, a variety of loosely connected, boundary-transcending layers of memory emerge, unfold, are being invented, at times in tune with the interests of the state and at times in competition with it (Gilroy 1993).

In addition, what so many call the banalization and trivialization of the Holocaust can be seen as a process that makes its history more accessible to larger groups of audiences (Rabinbach 1997). The recontextualization of the Holocaust as an American story reaches, indeed, beyond America's borders. The links between state, nation and culture are becoming increasingly disentangled. Hannah Arendt, in an almost lone cosmopolitan voice, claimed in 1945 after her emigration to the USA that 'the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe – as death became the fundamental question after the last war'. Who would have thought that

Steven Spielberg would carry her torch fifty years later? Can this be considered the revenge of civil society over the state? If so, it might be the true fitting answer to the horrors of the Holocaust.

## References

- Albrow, Martin (1996), *The Global Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Anderson, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Beck, Ulrich (2000), 'The Cosmopolitan Perspective: The Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity', *British Journal of Sociology* 51(1): 79–105.
- Berenbaum, Michael (1990), *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cheah, Pheng, and Bruce Robbins (eds) (1998), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cole, Tim (1999), *Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the 'Shoah Business'*. London: Duckworth.
- Finkelstein, Norman (2000), *The Holocaust Industry*. London: Verso.
- Flanzbaum, Hilene (1999), 'The Americanization of the Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research* 1(1): 91–104.
- Gillespie, Mary (1995), *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*. London: Routledge.
- Gilroy, Paul (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Halbwachs, Maurice (1980), *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1995), 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture', in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 237–51.
- Hansen, Miriam Bratu (1996), 'Schindler's List is not Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory', *Critical Inquiry* 22: 292–312.
- Junker, Detlev (2000), 'Die Amerikanisierung des Holocaust'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (9 September): 11.
- Linenthal, Edward (1995), *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Penguin.
- Marrus, Michael (1998), 'The Holocaust at Nuremberg', *Yad Vashem Studies* XXVI: 5–41.
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan (1995), 'Globalization as Hybridization', in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*. London: Sage: 45–68.
- Novick, Peter (1999), *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rabinbach, Anson (1997), 'From Expulsion to Erosion: Holocaust Memorialization in America since Bitburg', *History & Memory* 9(1–2): 226–55.
- Robertson, Roland (1995), 'Glocalization: Time–Space and Homogeneity–Heterogeneity', in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*. London: Sage: 25–44.
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H. (1997), 'The Americanization of the Holocaust', in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 119–50.
- Shandler, Jeffrey (1999), *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Anthony (1995), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Oxford: Polity Press.

## *Transnational Processes*

- (1998), *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tomlinson, John (1999), *Globalization and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Young, James Edward (1993), *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.